

questions, if this agreement is faithfully implemented—and I believe it will be—the answers to those questions are yes.

*Q.* Do you trust the Russians?

*The President.* Well, we—all I can tell you is, every time I've had an understanding with Boris Yeltsin, he's kept it. And we did work with them on a consistent, long-term basis for years now in Bosnia, and it's worked out. So I believe now that the agreement is worked

out, I think it will be honored. I expect it will be honored.

*Q.* Despite last week—

*The President.* Yes, absolutely.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:08 p.m. in front of the Cologne Cathedral. In his remarks, he referred to Minister of Defense Igor Sergeev, Minister of Foreign Affairs Igor Ivanov, and President Boris Yeltsin of Russia. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

## The President's Radio Address

June 19, 1999

Good morning. Tomorrow will mark the 2-month anniversary of the terrible school shooting in Littleton, Colorado. This tragedy shocked our Nation and galvanized our determination to protect our children from violence.

Together with the entertainment industry, we're finding new ways to reduce our children's exposure to graphic and gratuitous violence in movies, TV, and video games. Together with parents, teachers, and community leaders, we're talking about how we can increase our involvement in our children's lives and reach out to troubled young people before they act in violence; how together we can form a grassroots campaign against violence directed at young children. Together as a nation, we're searching our hearts and minds for the best way to prevent anything like this from happening again.

Now, one of the most urgent lessons of Littleton and the plea of so many parents who've lost their own children to gun violence is that, to keep our children safe, we simply must do more to keep guns away from young people and out of the hands of criminals.

Time and again, the gun lobby has used every weapon in its arsenal to defeat any effort to strengthen our gun laws, no matter how sensible. This week it, sadly, happened again.

I sent to Congress a very sensible, moderate proposal to apply Brady background checks to gun shows. These are the same simple background checks that have now stopped 400,000 illegal gun sales without stopping a single legitimate purchaser from buying a gun over the last 5 years. Thanks to a tie-breaking vote by

Vice President Gore, the Senate did the right thing and passed this measure. But the sound of the gavel hadn't died in the Senate Chamber before the gun lobby set its sights on the bill before the House of Representatives.

This week the House of Representatives gutted our bill in the dark of night—literally, after midnight—because the gun lobby didn't want commonsense gun legislation to see the light of day.

That is unacceptable. We can't allow the gun lobby to rewrite our laws and undermine our values. So today, again, I say to Congress: You've still got an opportunity, and you've still got an obligation to do the right thing and pass real legislation that will strengthen our gun laws, not weaken them. Pass a law that applies to all gun shows, not one that lets criminals turn flea markets and parking lots into gun bazaars. Pass a law that gives law enforcement enough time to run real background checks, not one that lets more criminals slip through the cracks. Pass a law that closes the deadly gun show loophole once and for all.

Try this: Before you send me that final bill, ask yourselves questions that are on every American's mind: Will this bill make it easier or harder for criminals to get guns? Will more lives be lost or more lives be saved? Is this about politics or putting our children's safety first?

I say to the gun lobby again: I wish you would help us. Nobody is going to be hurt by this legislation. But we've overcome your scare tactics and strong-arm pressure before. We did it with the Brady law; we did it with the assault

weapons ban. We've got the lowest crime rate in 25 years. The American people are safer, and honest hunters and sportsmen haven't been hurt a bit. The American people understand that commonsense gun laws don't infringe our rights; they protect our lives. It's that simple.

This isn't a partisan issue anywhere else in America. It shouldn't be a partisan issue in Washington. Let us learn from the lessons of Littleton. Let us remember the children of Littleton and, indeed, honor the memory of all

the children who lost their lives to gun violence in our country. Let's build a stronger and safer America for our kids in the 21st century.

Thank for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 11:43 p.m. on June 18 in the Senator Room at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Cologne, Germany, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. e.d.t. on June 19. The transcript was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

## Interview With Wolf Blitzer of Cable News Network's "Late Edition" in Cologne June 20, 1999

### *President Boris Yeltsin of Russia*

*Mr. Blitzer.* Mr. President, thank you so much for joining us on this very special "Late Edition" from here in Cologne.

There have been reports that President Yeltsin has been ill, erratic, that his behavior has been shaky. You just met with him a little while ago. What's your impression?

*The President.* Well, his behavior was neither erratic nor shaky today. He was strong, clear, forceful, and looking to the future. We actually had quite a good meeting. We got a lot done. We set out an agenda to continue to work on reducing the nuclear threat; to continue to work on reducing the likelihood of any cooperation of Russian entities with Iran's missile technology development; with working to help Russia comply with the IMF and get its economy going strongly again; and obviously, we talked about our commitment to fully implement the agreements we made over Kosovo.

So, today all I can tell you is I had good personal experience. He was clear, concise, and direct and strong.

### *Russia-U.S. Nuclear Security Cooperation*

*Mr. Blitzer.* But a lot of people were concerned when the Russians sent those 150 or 200 soldiers into Pristina so secretly. With the Russians still having thousands of nuclear warheads, should Americans be concerned about the security, the safety of that nuclear arsenal if there's a problem between civilian and military control of the Russian military?

*The President.* Well, so far, I can only tell you what our experience is, now in its 6½ years. We've worked very well with the Russian military to implement the system that was set up actually before I became President, although we've tried to strengthen it, to strengthen the Russian security over nuclear weapons, to strengthen security over other materials. President Yeltsin and I agreed last year to destroy 50 tons of plutonium arising out of nuclear operations. We have great confidence in that, and it's working quite well. I have no reason to believe that it won't continue to do so.

### *Russian Role in Kosovo*

*Mr. Blitzer.* But will you concede, though, that the dash for the airport in Pristina and the grabbing hold of that piece of territory helped them get a better deal for their peacekeepers in Kosovo than would have been the case if they had not done so?

*The President.* I'm not sure that's right, for the following reason: I felt it was important myself—and I told all of our people this, and several of our NATO Allies—that Russia have a different role in Kosovo, because of the importance of making clear our common commitment to protect civilians, both the Kosovar Albanians who are coming home and the Serbs who remain. Therefore, I thought it was important for Russia to have its forces in more than one of these sectors. And of course, as you know now, they'll be working with us and with the Germans and the French.